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ABSTRACT

This guide provides an overview of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 to help familiarize legislators with the law and its implementation and to give them information to answer questions from their constituents about the act. The following information is presented: (1) the goals of the act; (2) how school-to-work initiatives work; (3) the approach taken by school-to-work initiatives; (4) statistics showing that the school-to-work approach works; (5) answers to frequently-asked questions; and (6) statements of support from organizations involved in school-to-work initiatives. (KC)

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SCHOOL-TO-WORK HIGH YIELDS for:

- STUDENTS
- SCHOOLS
- PARENTS
- EDUCATORS
- EMPLOYERS
- LEGISLATORS
- BUSINESSES
- COMMUNITIES
- JOB MARKET

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A Guide for State Legislators

NCSL

CE 019 259

FROM THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE LEGISLATURES

NCSL's Education, Labor and Job Training Committee supports legislation and educational programs promoting the ability of all students to make informed educational choices (considerations) and self-determination practices through continued development of partnerships/support with business, parent-led and family organizations. This support will expand educational opportunities for all students and will enhance the quality of their learning experience and educational foundation for the future with integration of high academic standards for vocational-curricula and programs.

The NCSL Education, Labor and Job Training Committee encourages the support of business, parent-led and family organizations which promotes the distribution of School-to-Work moneys, assures federal moneys are approved by the legislature and affirms the right of the legislature to review and conduct oversight of the programs.

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AN AMERICAN INVESTMENT: SCHOOL-TO-WORK

The School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 provides seed money for innovative business and educational partnerships. These partnerships provide experiences that better prepare young people for the workplace than a traditional classroom experience can alone.

As a legislator, you can have confidence in School-to-Work and its growing success. With federal legislation due to sunset in 2001, School-to-Work is working for America. It is an investment in our youth that is paying off in our communities, businesses and job markets.

This overview can help re-familiarize you with the initiative, get up-to-date information on its success and answer questions from your constituents about School-to-Work.

GOALS TO HELP YOUNG AMERICA GROW

Nationwide, our public school systems are faced with a singular problem: students are graduating from high school ill prepared for the workplace or advancing their education.

As legislators, educators and parents look to implement positive changes in their local education systems, School-to-Work is one solution that is working right now.

School-to-Work, often referred to as a school-to-career movement, is creating a new form of education for a new economy. School-to-Work links learning with earning.

The goals of School-to-Work are to provide:

- Better education opportunities
- Better employment prospects
- Adult role models
- Multiple post-secondary options for all students

School-to-Work experiences develop competence, confidence and connections that can help to ensure successful careers and citizenship later in life. It enables high school students to have more choices after graduation. Whether a four-year college, two-year college, technical training or entry-level position on a career path, School-to-Work opens up options for students where, for many, none existed before.

HOW SCHOOL-TO-WORK WORKS

The School-to-Work approach is based on the proven concept that education works best and is the most useful for future careers when students apply what they learn in school to real life, real work situations. Rather than separate academic and vocational educations, this new approach makes education more relevant for all students and instills or emphasizes lifelong learning.

The way we work is changing. Our education system has to change, too.

America cannot afford a two-tiered educational system consisting of high-standards academics for some students and a low-standards vocational education for others. Schools must offer all students relevant, challenging academics and meaningful work-based experiences.

An education system out of sync with changing workplace needs places a heavy toll on American business. For example:

- More than 50 percent of U.S. employers report they are not able to find qualified applicants for entry-level positions.
- High-skill jobs are growing at three times the rate of other jobs. At the same time, of the 15 million young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who are currently not enrolled in school, about 90 percent don't have a college degree and 70 percent only have a high school degree or less.
- American business spends an estimated $30 billion on training and re-training its workforce per year.

What's the answer? Bring what and how students learn in school into sync with what they need to know and how they need to work on the job. School-to-Work is already working to do so in communities across the country.

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SCHOOL-TO-WORK GAINS ARE UP

Students

- See the relevance of education to the world of work
- Gain experience and understanding of educational and career options
- Achieve industry-recognized skill standards

Educators

- Get to teach in the context of real-life applications and careers
- See real results and motivation from a broader range of students
- Are rejuvenated by interdisciplinary team-teaching

Employers

- Access to new workers who understand the workplace
- Reduction of employee training costs and turnover
- Improvement in morale and management skills of adult workers

SCHOOL-TO-WORK APPROACH

School-to-Work was developed with the input of business, education, labor and community-based organizations all of whom have strong interests in how American students are prepared for careers. The national School-to-Work system contains three fundamental elements: school-based learning, work-based learning and activities that connect the two.

- **School-based Learning: Educators**
  Programs using the School-to-Work approach restructure the educational experience to teach students how academic subjects relate to work. Educators work with employers to develop broad-based curricula that help students understand the skills needed in the workplace. And educators work together to integrate subjects and tasks that allow students to work in teams and develop projects relevant to different careers and working environments.

- **Work-based Learning: Employers**
  Employers provide learning experiences that help develop broad, transferable skills for students. Work-based learning provides students with opportunities to study complex subject matters as well as vital workplace skills in a hands-on environment. Under the tutelage of adult mentors, students learn to work in teams, solve problems and meet employers' expectations.

- **Connections: Activities**
  A range of connecting activities is required to integrate participating employers and schools and ensure full support for students. Connecting activities include program coordination and administration; school and business staff exchanges; and student career counseling and college placement.

Needed: New Kind of Employee

People are the greatest investment and greatest competitive advantage for our nation's employers.

What does America need?

Employees who excel at solving problems, thinking critically, working in teams and constantly learning on the job.

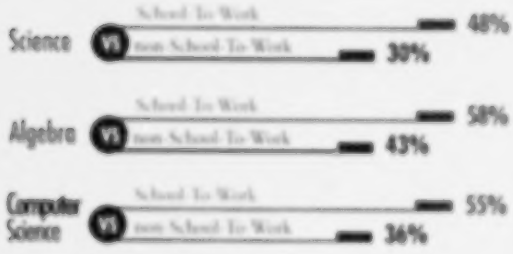
STATISTICS PROVE SCHOOL-TO-WORK WORKS

School-to-Work initiatives are more than a smart idea – statistics show that they yield positive results:

- Recent academic achievement data prove that these programs are making a significant difference in student performance.
- Business surveys reveal that School-to-Work graduates have better employment rates.
- According to public opinion polls, the School-to-Work concept is highly favored and valued.

SCHOOL-TO-WORK STUDENTS ACHIEVE ACADEMIC SUCCESS

HARDER CLASSES



- School-to-Work seniors took more advanced classes – and maintained comparable grades than non-School-to-Work students.

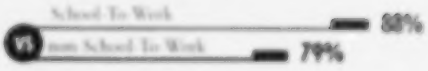
New York School-to-Work initiative, Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, Inc. 1998

FEWER DROPOUTS

- School-to-Work students had significantly lower dropout rates than non-School-to-Work students.

Philadelphia School-to-Careers programs, Philadelphia School District Study, 1997

BETTER ATTENDANCE

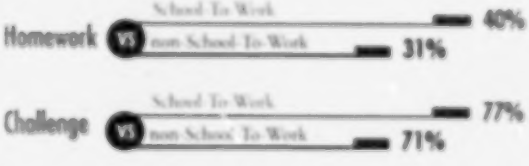


- School-to-Work students are more likely to attend school than non-School-to-Work students.

Philadelphia School-to-Careers programs, Philadelphia School District Study, 1997

HIGHER INTEREST

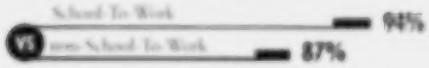
- 1998 School-to-Work students spend more time on homework and feel more challenged by course work than non-School-to-Work students.



New York School-to-Work initiative, Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, Inc.

BETTER GRADES

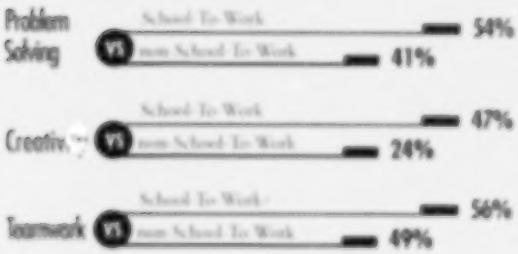
INCREASES GRADUATES



- School-to-Work students are more likely to graduate than non-School-to-Work students.

Philadelphia School-to-Careers programs, Philadelphia School District Study, 1997

BETTER PREPARED



- 1998 School-to-Work students were more frequently exposed to higher quality jobs that required problem solving, creativity and team work skills than non-School-to-Work students.

New York School-to-Work Initiative, Westchester Institute for Human Services Research, Inc.

HIGHER GPA'S

Program	0.0-.99 GPA	1.0-1.99 GPA	2.0-2.99 GPA	3.0+ GPA
School-to-Work	**14.4%**	**17.2%**	**39.3%**	**29.2%**
non-School-to-Work	**33.3%**	**19.7%**	**27.1%**	**19.8%**

- School-to-Work students maintained higher GPAs than non-School-to-Work students.

Philadelphia School-to-Careers programs, Philadelphia School District Study, 1997

PUBLIC BELIEVES IN THE SCHOOL-TO-WORK CONCEPT

PEOPLE FAVOR SCHOOL-TO-WORK

- Two-thirds of respondents believe there would be fewer dropouts if schools provided more career education.

Tennessean's Attitudes Toward the Workplace, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1998

- **96%** find School-to-Work approach "desirable."

Education and Workforce Issues: Public Attitudes and Awareness, Elusey Research, Inc., Davis Tietse & Co., 1997

- **86%** of Michigan citizens favor the School-to-Work concept.

Michigan Statewide Marketing Survey, Michigan Jobs Team, 1997

- **85%** of 1,200 registered voters nationwide say they would support "a change in the public schools to place more emphasis on all students preparing for careers and obtaining workforce skills."

Understanding Attitudes About School-to-Career, Jobs for the Future, 1997

- **93%** of parents endorse and support the School-To-Work concept.

California School-to-Career, California Statewide survey of parents, 1998

MORE CHOICES

SCHOOL-TO-WORK TEACHES RELEVANT LESSONS

- **90%** of teens say school would be more interesting and meaningful if it were taught in connection with careers.

Teens Attitudes Toward Work, Braskin Goldring Research

- Nine out of ten respondents feel that high school students would benefit from part-time employment that incorporates what is learned in school into the work experience.

Tennessean's Attitudes Toward the Workplace, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1998

PUBLIC WANTS CAREER EDUCATION

- **85%** of the public rated schools "Good" or "very good" that provide school-based and work-based learning, career options information and career training.

Public Perceptions and Opinions of the School-to-Work Program, Economic and Issues Research, Inc., 1997

- **94%** support business internship programs.

WQED National Poll, American Viewpoint, 1996

STW STUDENTS GET GOOD JOBS

EMPLOYERS SUPPORT STW

- **92%** of employers are more likely to hire students who have work experience on their resume.

Michigan Statewide Marketing Survey, Michigan Jobs Team, 1997

- One in four U.S. businesses and industries are involved in School-to-Work initiatives.

The National Employer Survey, the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce (EQW) and the U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1997

GRADS HAVE HIGHER EMPLOYMENT RATE

STW ProTech	87%
Boston Public Schools	75%
National average	71%

- Class of 1997 School-to-Work grads have a higher employment rate after graduation than non-School-to-Work students.

Boston Pro-Tech (STW) initiative, Jobs for the Future and Boston Private Industry Council Survey, 1997

GRADS HAVE HIGHER EARNINGS

STW ProTech	$8.17
Boston Public Schools	$6.77

- African American ProTech graduates who were enrolled in college and employed had **20%** higher earnings than their peers without School-to-Work experience.

Boston Pro-Tech (STW) initiative, Jobs for the Future and Boston Private Industry Council Survey, 1997

Q&A

ANSWERING CONSTITUENTS' CONCERNS

Even with the proven success of School-to-Work, your constituents may have some concerns about its potential to improve students' educational experience. The following are some commonly asked questions and answers that may be helpful to you as you discuss introducing or expanding the School-to-Work initiative in your state.

Q. Is School-to-Work another expensive, categorical job training program? No.

School-to-Work offers a clear, comprehensive framework that provides venture capital to states and local partnerships of parents, educators, employers and other community leaders to help students make the transition from schools to careers to lifelong learning.

The initiative does not necessarily create a new program. It supports a national system based on existing education and training program models and efforts such as career academies, youth apprenticeships, Tech Prep and cooperative education.

In 2001, the federal legislation sunsets and School-to-Work systems will be institutionalized at the state and local levels.

Q. Doesn't School-to-Work set lower academic standards and lead to low-skill jobs? No.

The School-to-Work approach achieves two goals. It improves the quality and relevance of education for all students and increases students' knowledge of and access to career opportunities.

This approach encourages students to meet high academic standards while experiencing hands-on applications of their classroom instruction in workplace environments.

High-quality programs incorporate new teaching methods, including interdisciplinary team teaching, block scheduling, project-based instruction, and other instructional and site-based innovations. These methods are consistent with and supportive of mainstream education reform movements.

Q. Why can't our schools just focus on teaching the basics and meeting high academic standards? That's what School-to-Work helps our schools to do.

Although we can continue to raise academic standards, we cannot force students to meet these standards unless they are engaged and motivated by their studies. School-to-Work is a method of teaching that uses work-based experiences to illustrate why students need to learn the basics. For example, a student who

Q&A

interns at an engineering firm will see first-hand how calculus is used in the workplace. The result is a student who is eager to learn this subject because he/she sees its practical application.

Q. Don't high schools already prepare kids for college and careers? No, not yet.

In this new global and technology-driven economy, the skills of the workforce are a company's major competitive advantage. However, employers report a shortage of qualified applicants for entry-level positions.

Currently, our educational system is not adequately preparing young people for the changing demands and opportunities of modern society. The traditional two-tiered system – placing college-bound students on an academic track and others on a vocational track – is no longer a successful model.

Today's schools must offer all students challenging, relevant academics and work-based learning experiences. School-to-Work provides a timely response by creating a new form of education for a new economy that links learning with earning.

Q. Is School-to-Work just for kids who aren't college bound? No.

Today's high-skill job market demands that all high school graduates have both advanced academic knowledge and workplace skills. School-to-Work integrates school and work-based learning – making classroom studies relevant to real-world applications. For example, a student who has the opportunity to observe a doctor at a local hospital will gain a first-hand understanding of how biology and anatomy are used on the job.

These kind of experiences help students develop both competence and confidence, as well as expand their choices after graduation, whether it is a four-year college, two-year college, technical training or skilled entry-level work on a career path.

Q. Is it true that most young people don't want to participate in such programs? No.

Nine in ten teenagers say they are interested in learning the School-to-Work way – in both school and on the job. Additionally, two-thirds of high school students want to get work experience while in school.

This tells us that the interest and opportunities for teens to benefit from work experience are extensive. School-to-Work can help place young people into appropriate positions that will prepare them for future careers.

(Statistics used throughout the Q & A are from a recent U.S. Department of Labor survey of 500 American teenagers)

Q&A

Q. Doesn't the expense and uncertain payoff of School-to-Work partnerships deter employers from becoming involved? No.

Employers support School-to-Work partnerships because they are helping students take rigorous academics, develop discipline, and focus on their future. Their reward is access to high-skill workers.

Business today spends about $30 billion yearly to educate its workforce. School-to-Work programs provide a competent, educated workforce capable of performing at high levels and prospering in a global economy.

In fact, many of America's top business leaders have worked to energize and mobilize community School-to-Work partnerships. These businesses are a part of the National Employer Leadership Council (NELC), a group founded by 19 CEOs to promote work-based learning opportunities for all students in collaboration with other business organizations, school systems, public-sector organizations, and federal, state and local governments.

The NELC also aims to enhance the quality of the nation's workforce and improve the productivity and competitiveness of American business in the global economy.

NELC members include CEOs of: Ford Motor Company, American Express, BellSouth Corporation, Eastman Kodak Company, Manpower Corporation, New England Medical Center and Siemens Corporation.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE *of* STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

For more information about School-to-Work in your state, contact:
School-to-Work Learning Center 1-800-251-7236

POLICIES OF SUPPORT

FROM THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF BUSINESS, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS, U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AMERICAN BUSINESS CONFERENCE

We strongly support School-to-Work initiatives as a way of motivating individuals to reach higher levels of academic excellence and equip themselves to succeed in the future. The School-to-Work learning strategy can provide better education, workforce preparation and the ability to learn throughout a lifetime. We believe that employers, educators and parents must work together to expand School-to-Work opportunities, which serve the best interests of our students, our businesses and our country.

FROM THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

The promise of School-to-Work is that it enables many students to master basic skills that they otherwise would not. The goals of School-to-Work initiatives are the same as those of other high school programs: prepare students for post-secondary education and for thriving in a competitive, changing economy. But what makes School-to-Work special is the method of teaching, not the goals.

FROM THE GROUNDHOG JOB SHADOW DAY COALITION

Through its annual career mentoring event, the Groundhog Job Shadow Day Coalition is dedicated to supporting School-to-Work's mission of linking classroom lessons to the working world. The Coalition sees the overwhelming positive impact on students' motivation, learning and future aspirations when businesses and educators work together to provide kids with hands-on experiences to supplement their classroom studies. School-to-Work has enabled hundreds of thousands of students to become successful in school and in life. The Coalition supports these efforts to help students realize, strive for and reach their potential.

SUPPORT

NCSL

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